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OPIUM SMUGGLING IN THAILAND CONTINUES; KMT TROOPS BLAMED

Summary: This report on opium smuggling in Thailand, gives information from Chinese-language newspapers published in Bangkok, Thailand. It notes the increasing efforts of the Thai police to suppress opium smuggling and mentions Chinese Communist press accusations that KMT troops in the Thai-Burmese border areas are engaged in smuggling.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended characters.7

The editorially independent Chung-yuan Pao of 20 September 1952 claimed that tightening of police and customs control in the Chiang Rai area during the past year has forced opium smugglers to shift their operations from the Chiang Rai-Lampang route to Chiang Mai. Smugglers active in Chiang Mai obtain their opium in Burma border area around Mong Heng, said the paper. The paper added that Mong Heng is nearer Chiang Mai than Ch'ing-shu (1) and Tachilek, two places in Burma which have been the chief sources of supply for the Chiang Rai-Lampang route. The paper attributed the high prices in Mong Heng to the Chinese Nationalist occupation of the town. The high prices are said to be responsible for attracting many people from Chiang Mai, who take their goods to Mong Heng, return with opium, and reap huge profits selling the contraband in Thailand.

According to a report from Chiang Mai in the 22 September Communist Ch'uan-min Pao, about 100 khaki-clad youths (nationality not mentioned) marched fearlessly through Muang Fang, on 16 September, while a machine-gun unit blocked all main traffic routes as they passed. A police official's conjecture, said the paper, is that these "troops," carrying new-model weapons, were probably returning from a completed opium-smuggling mission.

Indications that Thai authorities are taking positive steps to eradicate smuggling were noted in an 18 September Chung-yuan Pao report of a brigadier general being sent north by Bangkok police to survey the opium-smuggling situation. The paper predicted that on his return the officer would recommend the creation

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of a special police unit to study the Chiang Mai and Lampang routes as well as the geography of the area. Inadequate knowledge in this respect was blamed by the paper for poor results in the past. In the same issue of the Chung-yuan Pao was a report from Chiang Mai that large-scale opium smugglers who had virtually controlled Phrao [] had abandoned the city under pressure of intensive police activity and military investigations and that conditions in that city had been restored to normal. The report also mentioned police detention of a Mae Pong ward leader in Phrao on suspicion of having connections with the smugglers.

The Chung-yuan Pao on 19 September suggested that efforts to eliminate smuggling would be more effective if the Thai government would provide other employment for the opium carriers, most of whom are educated young people.

Police discovery of 2.8 million baht worth of smuggled opium during a search of the Mae Salit district of Ban Tak was revealed in the Ch'uan-min Pao of 26 September. Of this there were 45 tins of processed opium and 46 tins of raw opium. The paper added that two Thais were arrested as suspected owners.

The Chung-yuan Pao attempted to clear the Chinese of major responsibility for smuggling in a feature article in its 22 September issue. The real leaders in smuggling, according to that article, are not the Yunnanese, who merely carry the contraband across the border, but the wealthy dealers in Lampang who obtain large sums of money for the opium they ship to Bangkok. The Yunnanese, the writer explained, are mistakenly identified with smuggling mainly because those who participated in it around Chiang Mai had previously gained notoriety for their daring in transporting opium from Burma to Thailand. Further evidence supporting this theory, added the writer, is that some smugglers who have been captured or killed were not Chinese.

A huge smuggling ring in northern Thailand is supported by the Kuo (2) Tribe, according to a statement in the Chung-yuan Pao of 27 September attributed to Thai authorities. The paper said that men from this tribe, equipped with new-model weapons, were reported to have escaped after having fired 30 shots at special police who tried to intercept them.

CHARACTERS

1. 清東
2. 保

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